

Daniel Strom

I was born and raised in a Christian household-- a very Christian household. I was told all the time the miraculous story of how I was born. When I was 7 I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior and that was that. Like many people raised in Christian homes my testimony does not contain any road to Damascus or Jonah in the whale type stories, but that doesn't mean it isn't worth telling.

You see for many people raised in Christian homes it's very easy to become complacent. I often felt that since my parents were doing such great kingdom work, living fully surrendered [to quote Pastor Tom] lives, I figured it was enough for the whole family. And after all I was a good person, went to church on Sundays, could recite John 3:16, went to youth group, was polite and courteous and moral. But I lacked a personal relationship with Christ. I didn't read my Bible, unless it was for a test or I was sick. I didn't pray much. I thought that I just had to be a good person and go to church to achieve salvation. I guess I knew intellectually that that wasn't true, that it was only by Christ alone through faith alone that we were saved, that it wasn't by my power, or my works, or my righteousness [or worldly righteousness I should say] that saved me- but that it was Christ's death on the cross. But I found that hard to believe.

We live in a culture and a society where everything is earned, where nothing comes free, where whatever you are is a result of what you did--or at least we believe that. I think this attitude began to change for me in a very simple way because of my freshman biology teacher Mr. Bobkowski. I'm blessed by the fact that though I go to a public school my principal is a graduate of Wheaton College and a strong Christian, and I've had several teachers who were believers. So I've really never been much good at science, but I cared and still care, deeply about my grades, in fact I'll confess that at times grades have been the center of my life and my attention. This was especially true in freshman honors biology, after failing (massively!) the first test. I met with my teacher and went over what I did wrong. I found out that Mr. Bobkowski was a believer, he was getting a degree from Wheaton in Divinity, and he had a degree in Apologetics from Biola. We talked about faith and the Bible and the relationship between science and Christianity but what Mr. Bobkowski practically showed me was what grace lived out looks like.

I never got above a D on any of his tests- but he kept meeting with me anyways. Mr. Bobkowski didn't just give second chances he gave third and fourth and fifth chances. Mr. Bobkowski said I was one of his favorite students, that he loved having me in class even though I had some of the worst grades.

Mr. Bobkowski taught me, in a practical way, what grace looks like. The concept of grace had always confounded me because I was surrounded by people who talked about grace--my family, members of my church--who looked like they lived perfect lives. It can't be true that we can't really earn grace I thought, after all look at all the leaders in church they lived happy lives and did good things there must be a correlation. Grace was just too unbelievable. And then a brother in Christ, really an elder in Christ, my teacher in more ways than one showed me that grace in an area of my life that was the hallmark of works for me-- grades. He gave me chance after chance, and still loved me when I failed, and he taught me that there we will one day be graded on something more important than biology, he helped give me the courage to share my faith and helped me be fearless when I defended Scripture in class.

So I'll confess to you I don't live a perfect life, big surprise. But I live a life and have a faith now that is more personal and more aware of God's grace- a grace that I now see all around me- in a beautiful summer day, and the embrace of a friend and the guidance of a teacher. That knowledge of God's role in my life, of why I was saved, and why I don't need to earn my salvation has helped me grow in my personal relationship with Christ, extend that grace to others, and truly work towards living a more fully surrendered life.